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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2030
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [IAEA](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: BULGARIA SUPPORTS IAEA REPORT ON SYRIA, BUT
CAUTIONS IT IS NOT HIGH EU PRIORITY

REF: SECSTATE 16530

Classified By: DCM Susan Sutton for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Post delivered reftel points to Miroslav Zafirov, MFA Middle East expert on February 25. Bulgaria supports the February 18 IAEA report on Syria, which draws attention to Syria's clandestine nuclear program. Zafirov cautioned against pushing too hard on the issue, citing a lack of EU support. While the EU is in constant talks about Syria's relations with Turkey, Israel, France, the Middle East Peace Process, and internal security, according to Zafirov there is currently no discussion of Syria's nuclear program. Zafirov claims that Syria is using the situation in Iran, as well as its increased role in the Middle East Peace Process in a concerted effort to divert attention away from its nuclear program. He cited this as one reason for the current thaw in EU-Syria relations. He doubts that the EU will adopt a common position on Syria's nuclear program anytime soon.

¶2. (S) Zafirov's view is that EU members believe now is an opportune time to talk with Syria, as President al-Assad retools his cabinet and security agencies, and Syria continues to make positive overtures in the region. Bulgaria is particularly concerned about France's position on the IAEA Syria report, which Zafirov speculated may be too soft. Zafirov promised to personally hand over our points to Deputy FM Marin Raykov and offer a favorable opinion in support of our position.

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